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ABSTRACT

Several articles of interest to teachers of English as a second language (ESL) are included. "The Three-Tier Approach to Reading in the Subject Area" described by Trevor McQuinn consists of a procedure for developing lessons based on the need to teach vocabulary, comprehension, and literacy. "Teaching Beginning Reading: An Interview with Virginia French Allen, Part 1" presents Allen's ideas on teaching beginning spelling. In "From Language to Learning," Graham Patterson lists gambits to serve as stimuli to communication in the ESL classroom. "The Value of Linguistics in Second Language Teaching" to Jim Hutchison is the impetus it provides to examine critically the structure and nature of the language. Finally, Diane Harwood briefly discusses "Preparation of Multi-Purpose Materials." (JB)

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Vol. 3 No. 2 February 1978

TEFL TESL NEWSLETTER

FOR THE INTERCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND IDEAS
ON THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND
OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN AUSTRALIA

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EDITORIAL

Two features in this number concern the teaching of reading. Understandably, practical communication needs dictate a heavy emphasis on listening and speaking skills, but it would be unfortunate if this emphasis were to result in the teacher granting to reading a priority so low as to amount to neglect.

In some areas, the practical-minded ESL teacher may tend to see reading as one of the "bookish" features of an FL (as distinct from SL) course. This would be a great pity.

For the child on the threshold of secondary school, a high level of reading proficiency is essential to the successful pursuit of education. Likewise, for those migrant adults whose background makes them amenable to the development of a reading "habit", language in print is language acquired in a new (and - some would argue - a more durable) dimension.

For native-speaker and foreign learner alike, the printed word opens a window on the world and is the key to continuing education and personal development. For the migrant learner specifically, there is an additional bonus: reading exposes him or her to a range of language far richer than that which can be conferred by the language environment of the classroom alone.

THE THREE-TIER APPROACH TO READING IN THE SUBJECT AREA

*Trevor McQuinn

In my opinion the most important factor in the migrant child's English programme is that of relevancy. Relevancy of the language to the child's immediate needs in the school scene, be it science, social or sport.

I would suggest that the area most neglected is the language of the academic subjects. Traditionalists would argue that this should be the task of the subject teachers, that the ESL teacher's task is to instruct in the complex structures of the English language in line with the formats of books by such eminent writers as L G Alexander and Methold. If this view is the basis of teaching, then the end result will be students who speak carefully- structured English to the point of boredom and frustration. What are these structures? What relevance do they have? Where does the student apply these phrases? Do they help the student to achieve in the subject classes?

Materials written by Hill, Alexander, the Commonwealth Department of Education, etc., were never produced as a set of rigid, sequential lessons for ESL classes. They are guides, frameworks and examples which can be used to teach positive areas of English. What is the relevance of applying the confining and restricted content of these lessons to students who have more positive and vital needs?

I suggest that you can apply the structure of these lessons to the classroom material and be relevant.

> "Teaching reading skills in the content or subject area provides a structure in which the student can organize and apply new knowledge to relevant material in a relevant situation." (1974, Herber)

---

* Trevor McQuinn is the ESL teacher at Watson High School, ACT.

Each subject uses some form of written material, either teacher-produced or from a set text book. The use of this material imposes a tremendous language strain on students. They are, to a great degree, thrown on their own limited resources which linguistically are usually inadequate for the task.

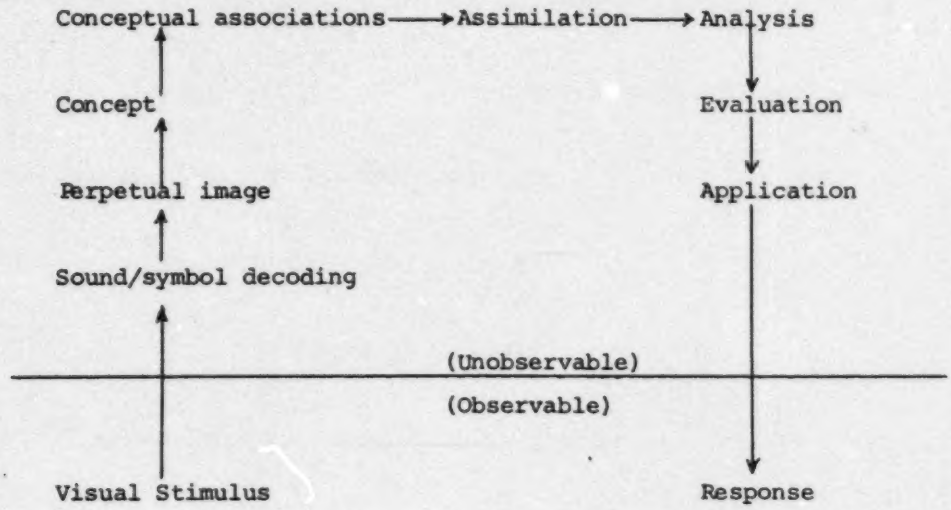
* * * \

In your subject area when you place a text before a student you are asking that student to read, act and think as a scientist or geographer, so then your material is a legitimate vehicle for teaching the reading of the subject.

* *

WHAT IS CRITICAL READING ABILITY?

The following simplified diagram will help you to understand the process of critical reading:



The rules which apply to this process are the rules a person applies when he/she reads a newspaper, comic, novel, textbook or poster. Then there is no difference or special skill needed for you to provide "readability" for your texts to your students.

I have found the most satisfactory method is:

(a) to obtain copies of subject material prior to its use in the classroom;

(b) to extract from the material vocabulary, grammatical points, comprehension, writing and study skills;

(c) to construct a lesson which utilises these points;

(d) to provide the student with an understanding of the language and the requirements of the subject assignment.

* *

A list of possible areas of teaching follows, but please do not expect to find all points in any one lesson.

I contend that this method does not interfere with the ESL teacher's control, but provides a vehicle for giving RELEVANCY to the lesson.

Oh, yes! The three tiers are:

1. TEACHING VOCABULARY

2. TEACHING COMPREHENSION

3. TEACHING LITERACY

The areas of study to satisfy requirements of traditional ESL method are:

VOCABULARY:
- Phonic analysis
- Structural analysis: syllabication, compound words, contractions, prefix-suffix, inflections, abbreviations, derivations, symbols
- Contextual analysis
- Conceptual associations: antonyms, synonyms, multiple meanings, categorising, generalisations, analogies, figurative language
- Dictionary skills
- Use of prior knowledge, hypothesising, predicting

COMPREHENSION: Literal, interpretive, applied

Pre-reading clues: word order, context, word selection

Structural emphasis

Key words, time/sequence, comparison/contrast, cause/effect

Mathematical/scientific processes

Organisational patterns: simple list, time/order, main idea/detail, compare/contrast

Reasoning: inductive/deductive, creative/critical, inference/interpretive

Facts and opinion

Purpose

Relevancy

STUDY SKILLS:

Recognition of: major/sub headings, main ideas/detail, relationships (verbal, clues)

Numerical

Spatial

Organisation patterns

Order/sequence

Problems

Relevance

Following directions

Graphic aids

Dictionary

Locational skills: alphabet, table of contents

* *

LESSON PRODUCTION

Now follows a sample of the procedures adopted. The material is from a Music text.

Step 1. Read the material and extract any technical or specialised terms: words which provide phonic, grammatical or constructional material.

Step 2. List these words.

Step 3. Decide on teaching points best utilised from the material. The following were used in the case of the music text:

(i) Syllabication

(ii) Phonics - long "i", blend "um"

(iii) Words with multiple meaning

Step 4. Words in context.

Step 5. Word extension for occupation or activity.

Step 6. The use of tenses - Present/Past.

Step 7. Introduce the need to extract correct information from a passage. (Comprehension)

Step 8. Research skill in identifying areas of information from clues.

Step 9. The reading individually, taped, chorus or teacher guided.

Step 10. Application of information.

* *

LESSON PROGRESSION

Certain of the above steps need to be described in greater detail:

Step 2 (i) The teacher reads through the word list.

(ii) The words are discussed to provide comprehension and pronunciation.

Step 3 The teacher then reads each of the exercises next to the word list and takes the class through each exercise.

Step 4 Students will read these exercises either with the assistance of the teacher or working at their own pace: this will depend upon the level of the literacy skills available to them.

Steps 5-6 As with Step 4, it is your decision based on literacy levels; or if this is new or revised knowledge.

Steps 7-8 This can be a class discussion exercise to (a) clarify, (b) introduce concepts of reading for specific information.

The use of the sign/symbol is to emphasise the use of paragraphs as writing for one major point.

Step 9 As suggested under Lesson Production, it is your decision. I suggest that by now the students will wish to try the reading for themselves.

Step 10 This can be a "follow-up" exercise for later verification of knowledge.

* *

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

NEW WORDS

MUSIC
INSTRUMENT
VIBRATE
STRINGS
BOW
PLUCK
STRIKE
TRIANGLE
PERCUSSION
WIND
PIANO
MIXTURE
FELT
TUNE
CYMBALS
NOTE
PITCH
VIOLIN
BRIDGE
COLUMN
TRUMPET
DRUM
FORCE
DRAW

EXERCISE A

(1) Circle all words with only two syllables.

(2) Tick (✓) all names of instruments.

(3) Cross (×) all words which tell you to do something.

(4) Which have the same "i" sound as in the word FIND?

_____

_____

(5) Which words have the "um" sound as in SUM?

_____

_____

_____

(6) Which words can have more than one meaning?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

EXERCISE B

Read each sentence and think about the underlined words. Circle the words below the sentence which you think best fit the words underlined.

1. The wind made the bush shake and move.

   rattle vibrate

2. The player plucked the strings of his violin.

   pulled at hit

3. The drum is an instrument you hit.

   strike blow

4. The hammer was covered with felt.

   soft cloth dust

5. The player will tune his instrument.

   repair adjust

EXERCISE C

Think about each set of words below. Write "S" next to a group or set, if you think it is the same idea. Write "D" if you think it is different.

strike/hit wind/blow pitch/tune

force/allow bow/ribbon

EXERCISE D

A person who plays a piano is a pianist or who plays a drum a drummer.
Who plays these instruments?

trumpet =

violin =

harp =

flute =

cello =

EXERCISE E

Today and Yesterday:

Today I play the piano; yesterday I played.

Now do these:

Today	Yesterday
show	
	knew
	made
draw	
	struck
blow	
press	
	hit

EXERCISE F

These sentences tell about musical instruments. As you read the text check (✓) the ones you think are right.

1. All instruments make sounds.

2. Only some instruments vibrate.

3. The cello is a stringed instrument.

4. The triangle is a percussion instrument.

5. The piano is a stringed instrument.

6. You cannot play a tune on cymbals.

7. The violin has more than four strings.

8. The violinist presses on the strings.

EXERCISE G

All paragraphs have a symbol or sign. Join each symbol to the correct sentence for the information in each paragraph.

Wind instruments

Playing a violin

Percussion instruments

Playing a tune

String instruments

There are many kinds of musical instruments. The pictures show some of them. All these instruments send out sounds. You know, then, that there is something in each one that vibrates. But in different instruments different things vibrate.

Some instruments have strings. The violin is a <u>stringed</u> instrument. The player makes a violin string vibrate by drawing a bow across it or by plucking it.

Some instruments have to be struck to make them give off their sounds. The drum is one. The head of the drum vibrates. The triangle is another. The metal in the triangle vibrates. Instruments that have to be struck are called <u>percussion</u> instruments.

Many musical instruments are <u>wind</u> instruments. The player blows into a wind instrument to make it send out sounds. He makes the air inside the instrument vibrate.

The piano is a mixture of a percussion instrument and a stringed instrument. It has strings that are struck with tiny felt-covered hammers. The hammers, of course, are fastened to the piano keys.

No one can play a tune on a triangle, a pair of cymbals, or a drum. On a piano or a stringed instrument or a wind instrument, however, a player can play a tune. He can play high notes or low notes as he wishes. He can, we say, change the <u>pitch</u> of the sound his instrument makes.

A piano has a different string for each note. The strings are of different lengths and different sizes. A violin has only four strings. They are all of the same length, but they are of different sizes. You might think that a violinist could play only four notes. But he can make each string give off many different notes by pushing it down in different places with one of his fingers. Only the part of the string between his finger and the bridge of the violin vibrates.

A player can play different notes on a wind instrument because there are ways of making the column of air inside the instrument longer or shorter.

A violinist can make the sounds from his violin soft or loud. He presses harder on the strings with his bow or plucks them harder to make a louder sound. A trumpeter blows harder into his trumpet to make the sound louder. A drummer hits the head of his drum with more force. The farther anything moves when it vibrates, the louder the sound is.

(continued on next page)

"ASIAN LANGUAGE NOTES: SOME LIKELY AREAS OF DIFFICULTY FOR ASIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH"

* No. 1: Burmese, Chinese, Khmer, Vietnamese
reprinted January 1978

* No. 2: Tetum, Portuguese, Japanese
(April 1977)

In preparation:

* Indonesian/Malay (expected availability: mid 1978)

*Thai/Lao) expected to be available in
*Korean) second half of 1978

Available for teachers' use through the Migrant Education Centre in your Capital City

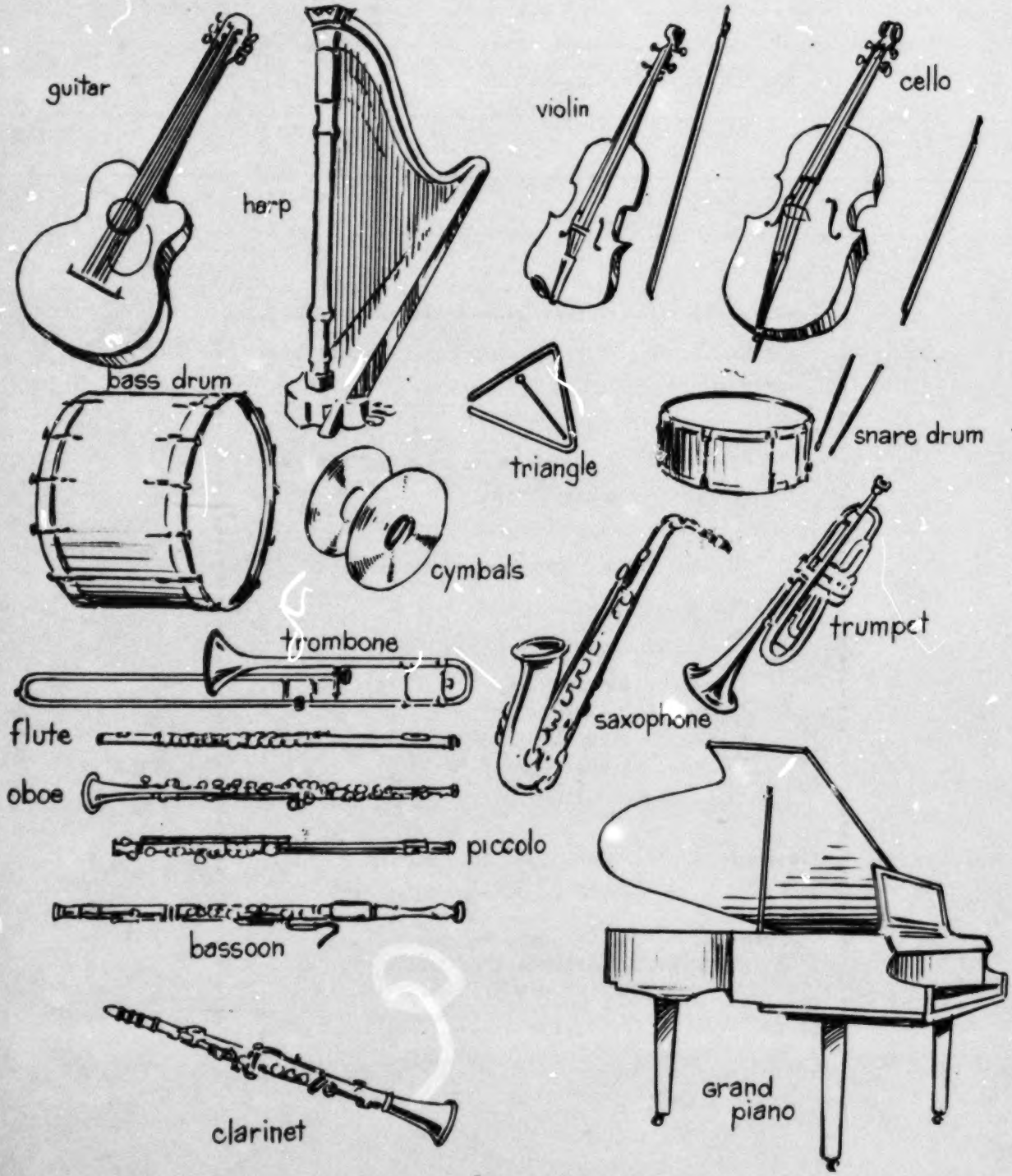
Produced by the Language Teaching Branch,
Commonwealth Department of Education,
Canberra

EXERCISE H

Think about it

Here are drawings of many instruments. If you think an instrument is stringed, write "S" against it. Write "P" for Percussion, "W" for Wind.

If the instrument is a mixture, then select the appropriate letters.



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TEACHING BEGINNING READING: An Interview with Virginia French Allen

Part 1 : Matching Sounds and Letters

Reprinted from "English Teaching Forum", Vol. XV, No. 1, January 1977

Dr. Allen's interest in reading dates back to the 1940's, when she wrote stories and essays for the Charles C Fries series, "An Intensive Course in English for Latin American Students". During the 1950's her publications included two readers for adults: "People in Livingston" and "People in Fact and Fiction". In the 1960's she served as series editor for the Falcon Books, designed for native speakers of English with reading handicaps. Over the years she has also adapted a number of books for the "Ladder Series". More recently she has produced the "Progressive Reading Series", eight books of readings for beginning and intermediate level students, published by the United States Information Agency. Dr. Allen is professor of English at Temple University, where much of her work is concerned with the training of teachers of English.

* Dr. Allen, for years we've been told that we shouldn't teach students to read in English until after they have mastered the oral language. What are your views on this question? How early in the English program can students learn to read? What are the first steps?

Probably the most important thing for students to grasp at the beginning is the correspondence between sounds and spelling. This can be approached through rhymes. If the students have learned to say any English words, if they know the meaning of those words, then you can show them how those words look in print. Particularly call their attention to the fact that some words sound quite similar. For instance, if the students know enough vocabulary, you can introduce the concept of rhyming words by giving them rhymes like these, where you have a blank space at the end of the second line:

Candy is sweet;

It's good to _____.

Most people would decide that the missing word is "eat".

Another simple rhyme that you can try with beginning students goes like this:

Sit in that chair

While I comb your _____.

The missing word, of course, is "hair". So the students get the idea that "chair" and "hair" rhyme, and that when you're talking about rhymes, you're talking about pairs like "chair" and "hair". When we deal with rhymes, we focus attention on sounds - on similar sounds, on words that sound alike except for their initial consonants. The perception of similar and different sounds is basic to reading.

Another rhyme might be like this one we native speakers of English learned as children:

Rain, rain, go away,

Come again some other _____.(1)

"Day" is the word that goes there. So "day" and "away" are perceived by the students as rhyming words. The two words are alike except for the first part; the first part is what makes the difference.

Or you can simply take any monosyllabic word that the learner can say and understand, provided that the monosyllabic word is regularly spelled. For instance, a very good choice would be a word like "sad", where we have "-ad" (/æd/), with "s-" coming before it, to make "sad" (/sæd/). By the way, /s/ is a very good sound to spell for students, because the hissing sound of /s/ is like the sound of a snake, and the /s/ sound is at the beginning of the word "snake".

* The letter "s" looks like a snake, too, doesn't it?

Yes, it does, so the shape of the letter and the sound of the letter are associated.

We have seen that if we start with "-ad" (/æd/) and put "s-" in front of it, we get "sad" (/sæd/). Taking "-ad" again and putting "d-" in front of it, we get "dad" (/dæd/). If we put "m-" in front of it, we get "mad". And, in the same way, "ad" is part of "bad". Now, that's not the same at all as just sounding out each letter and saying /s/-/æ/-/d/. Rather, this is /æd/ with /s/ in front of it.

Here are some examples of the kinds of one-syllable rhyming words that can be used in this way:

sad	hen	bed
dad	men	red
mad	ten	fed
bad	pen	led

* What is it that you want the students to see when they look at these words?

The most important thing is for the student to understand that there is a "system" which English-speaking people are responding to - a system underlying our use of letters and combinations of letters to represent sounds. If the students don't grasp that idea, they get the notion that every single word has to be memorized separately and that there is no underlying plan that pulls it all together.

For example, if we have the pattern consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC), as in "mad", for instance, that vowel between the consonants is going to be pronounced /æ/. And if we have consonant -"e"- consonant, the vowel "e" is going to be pronounced /e/ as in "pet". If we have consonant -"i"- consonant, that vowel in the middle is going to be pronounced /i/ as in "Tim". If the vowel letter is "o" in the consonant-vowel-consonant combination, it's going to be pronounced /ɔ/ as in "hop"(2), and if the letter "u" comes between two consonants, it's going to be pronounced /ʌ/ as in "cut". So the very first thing for the student to perceive is that there is a pattern here - a consonant-vowel-consonant pattern - and that he can be reasonably sure how a vowel letter will be pronounced in that pattern.

* Most words that have that CVC pattern, then, will be pronounced with the vowel sounds you have described?

Yes, if they're regularly spelled. The next thing that the student has to perceive is that if the letter "e" occurs after what we've just seen, the vowel that comes between the two consonants is going to sound like its name: "a", "e", "i", "o", or "u". Thus, "mad" (/mæd/) will become "made" (/meid/), "pet" (/pet/) will be "Pete" (/pi:t/), "Tim" (/tim/) will become "time" (/taim/), "hop" (/hɔp/) will become "hope" (/houp/), and "cut" (/kʌt/) will become "cute" (/kju:t/).

Here are the two patterns we have described:

CVC:	mad	pet	Tim	hop	cut
CVCe:	made	Pete	time	hope	cute

Many students come to school knowing the names of the letters: "a", "b", "c", and so on. Now they need to find out when the letter sounds like its name, and when it does not. It sounds like its name when we have an "e" coming at the end of the word - a silent "e". Sometimes there's a consonant before that silent "e", as in "made", "Pete", "time", "hope" and "cute". But even if there is no consonant between the vowel and the "e", the vowel will still sound like its name if it's followed by an "e". For instance, there is the name "Mae", the word "see", the word "pie", the word "toe", and the word "cue". And in each one of these words the vowel letter is pronounced like its name: "a, e, i, o, u".

CVe words: Mae see pie toe cue

* So if there's an "e" following, whether or not there's a consonant between the vowel and the "e", the vowel has what people sometimes call the "long" sound - what you've called the "name" sound?

Yes. If the word is regularly spelled, that's true - and that's the big thing. It's very important for the student to perceive the power of that final "e". Sometimes if I'm working with young students who are familiar with comic-book characters and science-fiction superheroes, I call that final "e" a "ray gun" or "laser beam".

* A "laser beam"? Will you explain that?

Well, from what I have read of science fiction, the laser beam is a weapon so powerful that it can cut right through a wall and affect what is on the other side of the wall.

* So you're saying that the "e" has a similar effect, in that it affects the pronunciation of the vowel even though there's a consonant (or "wall") between the "e" and the vowel?

Yes, and I want to show you how that works. Take the word "stop". If we want to add "-ed" to make it past tense, we can't add "-ed" alone. The "e" will change the "o" to its name sound, so that "stoped" would rhyme with "hoped" unless we do something about it. If we add another "p" before the "-ed" we can "protect" the vowel from being changed to its name sound. We might show this graphically as follows:

stop	/stɔp/
*stoped	/stoupt/
stopped	/stɔpt/

The student should learn to double a consonant to preserve the preceding vowel sound.

* The doubled consonant acts as a buffer, doesn't it?

Yes. In effect, you strengthen the wall by having a double consonant between the vowel and the "e". If we want to have an /ɔ/ sound, and we don't want it to change to the name sound /ou/, we double the consonant.

* Then we can think of that added (or doubled) consonant as helping to protect the vowel sound of the CVC pattern?

Yes. Suppose we start with the word "run", and we want to add "-er" to it to represent a person who runs. But "*runer" would rhyme with "sooner". The written word won't say /rʌnə/ unless we strengthen the wall between the "e" and the "u" by doubling the consonant:

run	/rʌn/
*runer	/ru:nə/
runner	/rʌnə/

In reading, this information helps a student distinguish "diner" from "dinner" and "supper" from "super", for instance.

* I think your explanation is a helpful way to show the student that a word with a double consonant is pronounced differently from a word with a single consonant. It provides a more graphic understanding than just a rule about doubling consonants.

Yes, it usually works as long as we're talking about regularly spelled words. Of course, there are many other things that a student has to perceive about the relationship between sounds and spellings, but it is surprising how much progress he can make if he learns (1) how the word is probably going to sound if it consists of a vowel between two consonants, and (2) how the word is probably going to sound if it is spelled with consonant-vowel-consonant-"e" (CVCe). But what is most important is for the teacher to present the student with examples that make these patterns clear - examples that help him perceive the underlying system.

* There really are a lot of regularly spelled words, aren't there - more than we sometimes think?

Yes, that's right. Sometimes teachers have trouble, though, distinguishing between words that are regularly spelled and words that are not. For instance, here we have two common words that look very similar:

has was

But one of them is spelled more "regularly" than the other. We said that the letter "a" coming between two consonants is pronounced /æ/. So you would expect the word "has" to be pronounced something like /hæz/, and it is. But we don't pronounce "was" as /wæz/. It is irregular; we pronounce it /wəz/ or /wɔz/. Therefore it would be much better to use the word "has" in the beginning reading materials if you want to show the student how that letter "a" is going to be pronounced between two consonants.

Here again are two very common words:

save have

Actually, "have" is more common than "save". But which one of them is regularly spelled? It is "save", isn't it, for it follows the CVCe pattern: /seiv/. But "have" is not pronounced /heiv/, as it would be if it followed the pattern. The correct pronunciation /hæv/ is irregular.

In the same way we have "goes" (/gouz/) and does (/dʌz/), as in "He does". "Goes" is a better word to show beginning readers, as it is more regularly spelled. And if you don't want the student to pronounce "does" as /douz/, you'd better wait and not let him see it along with "goes" until he has learned to associate "o + e" with the /o/ sound.

Again, we have "home" and "come". "Home" (/houm/) is regularly spelled, but "come" is not, because from the way it looks you would expect it to be pronounced /koum/, but it is really pronounced /kʌm/. Unfortunately, many beginning reading books introduce, in the very same lesson, words in which the letter "o" represents several different sounds. This can upset the students, because they begin to think there's no system at all to the way sounds and spellings are used. For instance, I have seen a reader that has a sentence like this in one of the first lessons:

Come home to me.

To the beginning student of reading, these may all look alike: "o-m-e", "o-m-e", "o-m-e" - that's how the student may see it. And yet the "o" in "come" is pronounced /ʌ/, in "home "it is pronounced /ou/, and in "to me" the "o" is pronounced /ə/. It is better for the students to see regularly spelled words at the beginning in order to help them perceive these important patterns of correspondence. Then the exceptions and irregular spellings can be added gradually.

* This brings up another question. We're talking about regular sounds and matching them with spellings. What about teaching English with a phonetic alphabet?

It does have one advantage. That is, it gives the student a sense of security because when he looks at a graphic symbol he's pretty sure he knows how that symbol is going to be pronounced - because in a phonetic script there's just one way of writing each sound. That sense of security is very important. But a disadvantage in using phonetic script is that the student cannot then walk out on the street and see signs written in the same alphabet which is being used in school. If you use phonetic script, the student has to unlearn it at some point and start learning the traditional alphabet.

* So the sense of security that comes with a phonetic alphabet is only temporary?

That's right, and it's not reinforced by any of the written English seen in the students' natural environment. Actually, it's not necessary to use a special phonetic script, either, if you start with regularly spelled words, and then very, very gradually introduce the irregularly spelled ones. Of course, it's true that you cannot get far in an English sentence without introducing a <u>few</u> irregularly spelled words. One of the most common words is the word "a", which is not pronounced the way it looks. Look at this sentence:

Peg made a cake.

Now, in order to have the student read this aloud without any difficulty so that he calls the word "a" /ə/ instead of /æ/ or /ei/, the first thing that we want to do is to call his attention to the fact that this is not a regularly spelled word. It's not going to obey the rules that he has been perceiving. One thing that I do with this is to put a fence or a wall around that word as if to say, "Watch out for this word; it's an outlaw word. We have to keep our eye on it. Let's keep it inside a wall. It's not going to behave the way it should."

Peg made [a] cake.

In the same way, we have the word "the" in the sentence:

The man hit the tree.

and we could draw a box, or a fence, around it, to say, "This is an outlaw word. This "e" is not going to be pronounced the way you would expect."

[The] man hit [the] tree.

There's a second device, developed by Robert L Allen, that I find very useful. His system uses numbers to represent vowel sounds.(3) He puts a numerical symbol (such as 1 or 3) under a vowel letter that is not pronounced the way one might expect it to be pronounced. The most useful of these symbols is the number one (1), which represents /ə/ .... This /ə/ sound is much more common than we think it is, and that's why the numeral 1 is used to represent the most common sound. The /ə/ is really the "number one" sound of English. Therefore some teachers of beginning reading put a 1 under the "e" of "the" to show that it's written with an "e" but it sounds like /ə/:

The man hit the tree.(4)
1 1

These two devices - walling off the irregularly spelled word and then using the numeral 1 to suggest the /ə/ sound - I find very helpful in teaching beginning reading. In that way I can introduce gradually a few irregularly spelled words without weakening the student's developing perception of regularities.

* And then I suppose the student has the assurance that if he sees none of those special marks he can go ahead and pronounce the words in the way that he has learned?

Yes, that's the important thing: that sense of security and assurance.

* I can see how helpful all this is in teaching students to match the sounds and letters. But, frankly, doesn't this sometimes get a little boring? I mean, with word-groups like "mad/sad/had" you haven't really got much content.

That's true. It is controlling the spellings in a way that's artificial, obviously, and teachers tend to feel that such material is boring. That's too bad, because once the teacher acts as though something is boring, the students naturally decide it must be boring. If the teacher can refrain from acting bored, the student finds it exciting to be able to break the code. For beginning readers, there's a real thrill in being able to look at a set of black scribbles on the page and get meaningful sounds out of them.

However, as a matter of fact, if you're clever or creative you can actually put together regularly spelled words so that there is a little bit of life in the sentence. For instance, take these sentences - they have regularly spelled words in them, but if you put them together they add up to something like a little story: "Bess ate cake." "Jim had fun." "Ben hit Tim." "Kate ran home." That could be a description of a birthday party for six year olds! Some teachers are able to write rather interesting stories using regularly spelled words with a very few irregularly spelled ones.

It is also important - and I'd like to stress this - for the teacher to be <u>telling</u> stories to the students, or reading stories to the students - stories <u>not</u> originally designed for teaching reading - interesting stories, exciting stories within the students' grasp of English, stories in which both regular and irregular spellings occur. All this should be going on while the students themselves are reading aloud material that mainly uses regularly spelled words.

* This brings up another question. While the teacher is reading to the students, should they listen with books closed, or follow along in their books and see the story as they hear it? Some teachers think this shouldn't be done.

Well, some people say that makes the students lazy - that they're leaning on the teacher too much, that it's too much of a crutch. But there are strong reasons why the teacher should read aloud a great deal to the students. It's important for the teacher to read aloud so that the students can notice where we pause in the sentence, which words we stress, and where the voice rises or falls. Sometimes, however, it may be better for the students to listen without looking at the printed sentences. I do think that at the very beginning it's better for the students to see material that consists mainly of regularly spelled words for the reasons I've indicated. We native speakers of English have built into our systems an understanding of at least these two rules. the consonant-vowel-consonant rule and the consonant-vowel-consonant-"e" rule. If that weren't true - if we didn't have these expectations already developed in our minds - we would not be able to read instantly many of the things we read. We are able to walk into a supermarket and take a look at a new product with a name that we've never heard and easily read it aloud in the way the manufacturer intended it to be read. Or if we're travelling through the country using a road map, and we come to a town that we've never visited before and we've never heard its name, still we can usually pronounce its name correctly. That's because we have internalized the common spelling patterns. So people ought not to underestimate the value of what's called "sounding out" words. It's true that that's only part of reading, but it is an essential step.

* What about having students read aloud? Some teachers think that having the student just read aloud off the page is all that is needed for teaching reading.

Yes, I know. But you and I have visited enough classes around the world to deplore the fact that some teachers just have the students read aloud all period long. Many times, unfortunately, the reading class goes like this; the teacher explains the vocabulary words, perhaps writes the native-language equivalents of the words on the blackboard, and then devotes the rest of the period to reading aloud by the students, one by one. "Mary, stand and read. ... Sit down." "John, stand and read. ... Sit down," and so on and on. I don't think anybody gets much out of that kind of reading lesson. I'm not in favor of having much reading aloud done by the students, at least in the presence of other students, because the way they read aloud affects the understanding of their classmates, sometimes adversely.

* Would you say, then, that we should never have the students read aloud?

No. I try never to say "never" about any teaching procedure. Reading aloud by students occasionally does have its place. But mostly I would hope the reading aloud would be done by the teacher, while the students follow with their eyes.

* Now, you've said that this important matter of learning to match the sounds and the spellings is an important <u>first step</u> in learning to read. But surely there are many other things that must be considered.

Yes indeed, there are many things, and all are vitally important. Vocabulary, the student's oral experience with the language, the amount and kind of <u>thinking</u> that takes place while he reads - all these are important. Reading is a very, very complex matter.

In Part 2 of this interview Dr. Allen discusses some of the other aspects of learning to read at the beginning and intermediate levels: vocabulary expansion, grammatical problems, meaning, and comprehension. Part 2 will appear in the next issue of the "TEFL/TESL Newsletter".

REFERENCES

1. Some additional examples of two-line rhymes:

Children like to play with toys,
Children make a lot of _____.

There once was a cat
That caught a big _____.

Every night when I go to bed
The pillow is where I lay my _____.

Red is a color; green is, too,
So is purple; so is _____.

When the light is green, you can go ahead,
But be sure to STOP when the light is _____.

Pick your clothes up off that floor!
Somebody's knocking at the _____.

Don't forget to be home by eight,
You'll be sorry if you're _____.

2. Editor's note: the necessary adjustments from American to Australian English have been made in the examples used in this article. The phonetic symbols used here conform to those of "Situational English for Newcomers to Australia".

3. For a detailed description of the number system for symbolizing vowel sounds, see "English Sounds and Their Spellings", by Robert L Allen and others (New York: Thomas Y Crowell Co., 1966).

4. A minor alternation has been made to the text of this paragraph in order to make it meaningful in an Australian context: the original, in fact, dwelt at some length upon the mnemonic value, for this purpose, of the US pronunciation of the word "one" (/wən/), which of course for Australians is /wʌn/ and does not contain the /ə/ sound at all. -Ed.

FROM LANGUAGE TO LEARNING

*Graham Patterson

At Armidale there is a class of adults who are learning English as a second language on a format and sequence that could be outlined as:

I. REVISION
II. EXPOSURE TO NEW LANGUAGE
III. A CHANCE TO GENERATE LANGUAGE
IV. PRACTICE DESIGNED TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The class has an extreme range of ability both in regard to spoken and written English, as you will see when you read their contributions to the lesson described below. However, as the teacher, I regard this range of ability as an advantage and make no attempt to grade them, not even on performance.

In answer to several requests, I will endeavour to outline how this class operated on one particular evening.

I. REVISION

The previous lesson had been on cooking and in particular the class had:

(a) discussed how they liked to cook eggs,

(b) experienced the significance of a birthday cake, and

(c) made some pikelets.

From that lesson the following material prepared by the students was used for the purpose of revision and consolidation.

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* Graham Patterson is a Lecturer in Multi-Cultural Studies at Armidale CAE. The work described in this article concerns an evening continuation class of adult migrants.

1. From a discussion segment this substitution drill was produced.

We talked about many ways to cook/prepare eggs
———————————
We can boil eggs in a saucepan.
We can fry eggs in a frypan.
We can poach eggs in a poacher.
We can scramble eggs in a frypan/saucepan.
We can cook eggs in sand.

2. From one student's comments on a sample of food brought in by another student this passage was shown on the overhead projection screen, re-read, then used for dictation.

"The food Sylvia cooked was very good.
It looked like soup. I liked the taste
of garlic and green pepper."

3. This next sheet, prepared as an overhead projection by the teacher for use in the previous lesson, was then re-used. However, as a revision exercise, the verbs in brackets were removed from the original and written on an overlay, so that a "seen" completion exercise could be done. That is to say, the material is seen, removed while completed orally and replaced for checking and writing.

RECIPE
Pikelets
1 egg
2 level tablespoons sugar
1 cup milk
1½ cups flour (S.R.)
pinch salt
1 tablespoon melted butter

Method

(Turn on) the frypan
(Sift) flour into bowl
(Add) the salt and the sugar
(Break) and (beat) the egg
(Add) the egg to the flour
(Add) the milk to the mixture
(Melt) the butter
(Add) the butter to the mixture
(Cook) the pikelets
(Turn off) the frypan
(Eat) the pikelets

4. Finally for revision, this passage, written by a student onto an overhead projection, was shown and read to the class by the student who wrote it.

> "Last Thursday our teacher had a birthday. She had a big surprise! She brought a cake and made some pikelets. When we made the pikelets everybody had a turn. I wasn't very good at making pikelets but they didn't look too bad so you could still eat them, thank goodness. We had a very, very good evening."

It is most interesting to compare this final version for class use with the original, produced during the previous week's lesson, but before being shaped up with the teacher's assistance.

> "Last Thursday auer teacher had Birthday. She has a big surprise! She broth case and Piclets. They were very nice. Whene we made the Piclets everybody had a turne I wasn't very good at Piclets meaking but they didn't look to bad so you still could eate them thank goodness. We had a very, very good eavning."

Quite revealing, n'est-ce pas?

That wrapped up the revision section in a very active half hour and an absolute minimum of preparation on the part of the teacher.

II. EXPOSURE TO NEW LANGUAGE

At the previous week's lesson the class had decided that the next theme or topic area would be birds.

The students brought in some pictures of birds and one student brought a picture of herself with her pet canary sitting on her shoulder.

As the teacher, I found a chart of Australian birds and a film strip (stills) of "Australian Birds of Bush and Garden". It presented 15 common birds shown in colour in their natural habitat. Usually both male and female were shown. The birds shown included:

Willy Wagtail
Magpie
Pee-Wee
Kookaburra
Honey-eater
Bower bird
Crimson parrot and others

First, I made a brief comment on each of the pictures brought in by the students:

These birds don't look like the birds I've seen around Armidale. Are they Northern European birds?
OR
Is this a crow or a raven?
OR
I know this one. It's a robin red-breast, isn't it?

The students were not expected to speak or write, but I did get some brief answers to my otherwise rhetorical questions.

Then I showed the film strip. For each frame I gave brief comments:

"That's a Willy Wagtail.
I'm sure you've seen one in you're garden.
They're very common.
They eat flies and other insects.

They're exceedingly quick and quite cheeky.
They'll even tease a cat because they know they can
always dart away before the cat can catch them.
They make a sharp chirping sound like (whistle).
Are there Willy Wagtails in Indonesia?"

After the film there was a general discussion. The pictures were passed around and everyone said something, even if it was only a one word question. "Magpie?"

No attempt was made to correct or refine the language used: the object was communication and knowledge interchange.

Note the extreme difference between the language I presumed they could receive or understand and the language I expected them to produce.

All in all the exposure section took about twenty minutes.

III. A CHANCE TO GENERATE LANGUAGE

The students were then asked to think for a few minutes about something they would like to say or write. They had the option of writing it or putting it on tape. It was not expected to be more than one or two sentences, but as you will see, many students exceeded this minimum requirement.

Before the students put their contributions on tape or paper, they outlined their content to me as teacher and I wrote and pronounced some of the essential words and phrases:

uncle; pigeons; where we lived; used to help
(see below for full text)

Then at his own pace each student recorded his version of language on tape or paper. As a tutor, I assisted where necessary with spelling, punctuation, pronunciation, sentence construction, tense, or generally to shape up ideas. As each student completed and/or refined his contribution he wandered off for a coffee break.

For some, this session took 15 minutes. Others used a full half hour, but it didn't matter because the coffee break was lengthy and flexible.

Examples of the "shaped-up" language generated:

ON TAPE

1. In Thailand where we lived* my uncle had many pigeons. I used to help my uncle feed the pigeons with rice and beans*.

* Two corrections necessary:

/liv/ to/livd/ and /binz/ to /bi:nz/

ON TAPE

2. I know a bird that pinches shiny things*. It is black and white and it is a little bit smaller than the magpie. You have to be careful or it might pinch your jewellery so I would say close your windows just in case the bird comes* along.

* Tended to drop 's'es and speak without stress and juncture but after hearing each sentence and imitating once only the production improved markedly.

ON O/HEAD PROJECTOR AFTER INITIAL ATTEMPT ON PAPER

3. I like canaries.
At home I have a canary.
I called it "Stewey".

This was produced by a woman who has lived in Australia for over 20 years and is an incessant talker but very hard to decipher because of extreme interference from first language rhythm and stress. She operates on a limited range of English vocabulary and over-uses a limited and inaccurate set of sentence patterns. She needed specific help in writing even the three short sentences above.

4. One* day we became* new neighbours and we were* all very excited. Our new neighbours were a nice couple of plovers. At first* it was all nice and quiet, but after a few weeks our neighbours started to make an awful noise day and night. The reason* was they had 2 small chicks.* From this day on the parent-birds attacked anyone who came near their nest.*

* Shaping up required.

'Once day' to 'One day'
'became' - German-speaker's L1 interference
(bekamen wir) ? (ED.)
'was' to 'were'
'The first time' to 'At first'
'reisen' to 'reason'
'small, little birds' to 'small chicks'
and the last sentence re-constructed completely by me as teacher.

5. In my country I had a parrot. It was very funny. It was red, green and blue. It could talk quite well. It knew the difference between male and female. When it talked to a boy, it said, "Hello 'Bapak'." When it talked to a girl, it said, "Hello 'Ibu'."

The first attempt was:

In my country there is a parrot.
It is very funny, It is read, green
and blu. It can talk good.
It know difrerence between man and
women. When it talk to a boy it said
hullo Bapak.
When it talked to a girl it said hullo ibu:

As you can see the message was clear; she just needed some help with tense and punctuation.

6. TWO CROWS

I will talk about two special crows I know. I think they are male and female. The thing is that they usually come and beat on* the window of my flat very early in the morning. Then they start making* those funny noises. They are like an alarm clock. When they start cawing* it is time for me to wake up.

* The only changes needed were:

'beat the window' to 'beat on the window'
'start whistling' to 'start making'.
As teacher, I suggested 'cawing" and asked if she meant 'time to get up'.
I got the reply "Good heavens, no. Who wants to get up early like that?"

Finally, this little 'pièce de résistance' from a student I can barely comprehend even in a relaxed one-to-one situation. She is acutely aware that she cannot make herself understood to Australians.

7. THE CUCKOO

The cuckoo is one of those birds that stays* with us only as long as the weather is fine. It comes in the pleasant springtime, when the leaves begin to peep from the buds on the trees, and when the flowers begin to smile in the green meadows. When we hear the cuckoo's* song in the woods we know that the cold days of winter are over and gone.

* 2 changes only:

'stay' to 'stays'
'cuckoo' to 'cuckoo's'

Note: (a) Of course we don't use 'meadows' and 'woods' much in Australian English, but then we don't have European cuckoos either. Isn't that what multicultural education is about?

(b) Had I been asked to grade this woman on her arrival at the class, I would have ranked her as a raw beginner. As it is, she is both a beginner and the most advanced in the class. Do you still believe you can and should grade students?

There are more examples but that should be enough to indicate:

(a) The range of ability
(b) That any student can produce language from experience, but I defy anyone to produce meaningful language from sentences!

IV. PRACTICE DESIGNED TO PRODUCE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

After the coffee break we listened to or read each contribution. Then I selected some aspect of each for specific attention.

From No. 1 (on tape):

The sentence "I used to help my uncle feed the pigeons with rice and beans" was extracted and put on a projection sheet as

I used to help .....
with .....

We all contributed to make a substitution drill, and I recall that "I used to help my older brother feed his silkworms with mulberry leaves; even though he didn't want my help!"

From No. 3 (written):

We all began with

I like .....
At home I have .....
I.....

and wrote, then spoke, our own version.

One version was:

I like dogs.
At home I have no dog because it was lost today.
I think my husband gave him to the dog-catcher.

Note: On the local news there had been much talk about the dog-catcher working extra hours to round up all the stray dogs in Armidale.

From No. 5 (written):

I wrote the words underlined on an overlay then erased them from the original projection sheet.

Imagine now we still have the whole passage:

> In my country I had a parrot. It was very funny. It was red, green and blue. It could talk quite well. It knew the difference between male and female. When it talked to a boy, it said, "Hello 'Bapak'." When it talked to a girl, it said, "Hello 'Ibu'."

but I can remove all the words underlined by removing the overlay. Then we tried to put the missing words in orally. Try it, I didn't find it easy. Finally, I told the class I was going to get them to write it for dictation after half a minute to look at the complete passage. I gave the dictation as complete sentences said twice.

From No. 6 (written):

I extracted 'talk about' from the first sentence and we generated sentences orally using the following: (the past tense was more natural)

talked about
read about
wrote about
sang about

You can imagine the kind of patterns that could arise. Our examples led to "talked about her after she had left" and "talked about her behind her back" (gossip).

Also we took the final sentence "When they start cawing it is time for me to wake/get up" and we substituted for the underlined words:

the lambs - bleating
the horses - neighing
the ducks - quacking
the cats - miaowing
the dogs - barking
the baby - crying/"squawking"/gurgling
the birds - chirping
the cows - mooing
(which led to . . . time for me to milk them)
the cocks/roosters - crowing

CONCLUSION

We did other things too, such as 'cloze' procedure, (i.e. cutting out every fifth word) and alternative sentences, but that's enough to show we did get down to a good deal of structurally controlled practice.

I also gave out a reading passage for anyone who wanted to read and/or answer the comprehension questions before next week's session. About half the class did that voluntary exercise.

In fact, follow-up work chosen in response to individual needs at various levels was usually given so that students could do additional practice at their own pace in their own time. (See Appendix 1)

In all, it was a productive, informative and socially enjoyable session and before you could say "Jim had written five sentences before it was time to leave" as a chorus drill, the three hours had slipped by.

All that needs to be said is that I find this approach satisfying and effective. The preparation is not too onerous, as everyone helps to find and produce the material we need. So if you feel like trying this approach, or modifying it to suit your particular situation, good luck!

APPENDIX 1

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Many centres involved with the teaching of English as a Second Language have accumulated a large amount of material in the form of:

- text books
- tapes for specific practice
- tapes of dialogues
- reading passages
- writing exercises
- pronunciation and spelling material and tests.

Such material is invaluable and easily incorporated into the programme previously outlined. However, it hardly needs to be said that such material should not be set as a whole class exercise. In fact there are two possible approaches:

EITHER

A period of time is set aside for individual practice on this supplementary material with the teacher or teachers acting as tutors. If this method is used, the material should be adapted to be as self-correcting as possible. The tutor's role then would be one of guidance in selecting appropriate material in regard to level and specific practice needs. Also the tutor may be required to supervise and discuss the activity with individual students and re-direct students if the material proved too hard, too easy or irrelevant. Obviously, this arrangement lends itself readily to working at home if that is desired.

OR

Students could be formed into small groups (3-6 persons) to work together on the same set of material chosen because of its appropriateness for all persons in the group. Where such a group operates by interaction and comparison, I have found that the collective knowledge prevails and constant discussion and correction acts as a very effective learning device. In fact, the teacher may only be required to select the appropriate set of material in the first place or arbitrate when the group cannot reach a consensus on what is correct and acceptable.

APPENDIX 2

ANSWERS TO CRITICAL QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1: Do you see any limitations on a long term basis?

ANSWER: Certainly not, because when the students cease to find some topic or theme about which to learn and generate language then they have also ceased to have a reason for learning a new language.

Or in other words this programme or approach recognises the fact that no one ever wants to learn a language; rather they want to do something, or more precisely, they want to be more.

In fact, several teachers working in the adult area in Melbourne are considering a similar approach and are finding that it is consistent with what Paulo Freire has been advocating for adult literacy programmes in South America.

QUESTION 2: Your example refers to a relatively small class of 10-12 learners. Would this approach still be effective with a larger group?

ANSWER: I have tried it with a large group of overseas trained teachers (25) meeting for an optional 9 hours per week (3 nights a week with a 3 hour session each night).

Most of the students could only get along 1 or 2 nights each week due to other commitments. But even when 18 to 20 were present, it worked really well even though I had not, at that stage, refined the techniques.

At least, it did once the students realised that they could still actively learn even when I as teacher was not interacting with them directly. In fact, that is the essence of the whole approach: it forces the students to become active learners rather than passive recipients. They actively produce language and act upon it rather than receive the teacher's language which in most cases is INAPPROPRIATE or AT THE WRONG LEVEL.

QUESTION 3: But didn't you say that exposure to language was a vital part of the approach?

ANSWER: Yes, the exposure to language is necessary to provide a context in which to generate language. Also, the exposure segment presents a variety of language that may well exceed their productive language capacity.

However, I do not attempt to teach the sentences or forms used in the exposure segment. In a way, it is comparable to watching a professional golfer. You get an idea of the total process but you don't expect to walk onto the course and do likewise. As a learner, you don't need to be reminded that a lot of generative and developmental practice is necessary.

QUESTION 4: Surely the learners will make a lot of errors. Isn't this rather dangerous and likely to lead to bad habits?

ANSWER: All learners make errors, but the errors become habits if the learner is not encouraged to be aware of his shortcomings and take immediate steps to remedy them. I don't consider the students' first attempts as wrong or containing errors so much as steps in the process of arriving at acceptable or precise forms.

QUESTION 5: And do they reach that point?

ANSWER: They certainly do. I see no point in propagating errors from one student to another. Incidentally, the teaching of language via sentence patterns, which is part and parcel of the situational method, produces a whole crop of errors that people who generate language, either as first or second language speakers, never make.

QUESTION 6: Surely you don't advocate this approach for complete beginners?

ANSWER: I certainly do. It is important that all learners begin the way they are to continue. In fact, one of the reasons I decided on this approach was my experience with school children that were regarded as 'complete beginners' by their teachers. and therefore not expected to do anything until a teacher had taught them enough English to get started. For example, in a Year 6 Class I visited, a recently arrived migrant girl was 'twiddling her thumbs' while the class did a project on animals. I sat down with her and we began communicating over a book on horses. At first, her communication was non-verbal in response to my pointing and verbal comments. However, 5-10 minutes was sufficient for her to establish basic verbal forms that I could elaborate on.

QUESTION 7: But there must be some patterns that are essential which the learner will need as basic starting blocks for language?

ANSWER: Of course, and if they are so essential they will be generated very early and very often.

QUESTION 8: Don't you think the stimulus will wear thin if this approach is used everyday on an intensive course?

ANSWER: Having taught for many years on intensive or accelerated courses, I found that the stimulus offered was usually an artificial one based on language premises held by the teachers (or the authors of text books) and sustained by the myth that you can learn the language first and do something worthwhile with the language skills after they have been acquired. The tragedy was that the students also believed that myth and set about a task which had no immediate relevance.

The myth does not hold up because it is founded on a deficit model that puts the learner in an inferior position that restricts learning.

Instead, we should consider adult learners as having considerable knowledge that they can apply to new learning situations and as they learn something of relevance they also learn how to communicate.

QUESTION 9: In effect, you have turned the process upside down, haven't you? You are proceeding from a challenging learning situation through language generation and communication back to a breakdown of language or sentence patterns required for that task, is that it?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION 10: Isn't that rather radical?

ANSWER: If you consider this approach in relation to common practice in the teaching of English to adults, then I suppose it is. However, I personally do not consider it radical as it is an approach that I have developed by continual slight modifications over a period of at least 10 years.

The above questions were asked by a number of people including administrators, teachers, and students over a period of several months, hence I have tried to re-capture the answers I gave.

THE VALUE OF LINGUISTICS IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

*Jim Hutchison

My initial reaction to such a topic was to assert that the study of linguistics had little of value to assist the ESL teacher.

First, what is linguistics? It is essentially the study of language with primacy being placed upon the spoken word. The study of linguistics includes the areas of registers, phonology, grammar and semantics. However, many may believe that this definition is too narrow to apply to linguistic studies that have been undertaken in the 1960's and 1970's. During this period the range of linguistic study has been extended by contact with the fields of psychology and sociology to such an extent that D A Wilkins, in "Linguistics in Language Teaching", states that the boundaries of linguistics are "impossible to define". (1974, Wilkins, 4)

When one considers that the study of linguistics concerns itself with the areas of registers, phonology, grammar and semantics, and that these aspects of language are essential to the practice of ESL teaching, why was my initial reaction to this topic a belief that linguistic study had little of value to offer the ESL teacher?

Perhaps this initial and somewhat harsh reaction was due to the differing nature of the tasks confronting the linguist and the ESL teacher. Whereas the linguist takes a language and then proceeds to examine, dissect and describe the language, the ESL teacher is concerned with putting a new language into the mind and speech of a student and developing the use of this language in the student until the language becomes highly functional. Possibly another reason for

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my initial reaction was due to the fact that although the study of linguistics and the teaching of language have language as their common subject matter, linguistics is not about language teaching. Whereas linguistics could well be considered a science, I consider language teaching to be much more an art than it will ever be a science. The multiplicity of factors involved in the learning-teaching process could ensure that ESL teaching may continue to be more an art than a science in the foreseeable future.

However, upon more reflection I arrived at the conclusion that the study of linguistics is more than a sterile academic exercise as far as the ESL teacher is concerned. After all, language is the bridge between the studying and the teaching of a language. Having said this, it is necessary to stress that despite the mutual interest of language, the interflow between the discipline of linguistics and the art of teaching is rather limited. In fact, there does not appear to be much in teaching that is influencing the linguists. Wilkins states that

> the aims of language teaching and linguistics are different. The linguist does not aim to facilitate the acquisition of language when he describes it. (1974, Wilkins, 227)

Many writers on linguistics, from Chomsky onwards, have advocated great caution in attempting to apply linguistics to teaching. For example, Chomsky once made the following blunt statement:

> I am frankly rather sceptical about the significance to the teaching of language of such insights and understandings as have been attained in linguistics and psychology. (1966, Chomsky, 45)

However, despite the cautionary notes that have been sounded, I believe that a study of linguistics can, in some ways, produce a more efficient ESL teacher.

For example, I consider that a study of linguistics can accentuate one's critical faculty in the teaching of English as a second language. However, the question could be posed as to whether it is the study of linguistics that sensitises someone to language, or whether it tends to be the person already endowed with a sensitivity to language that undertakes the study of linguistics? I also believe that one becomes more acutely aware of the various registers of speech and the varieties of expressions used when the study of English phonology is undertaken.

Through the study of grammar and semantics, one is forcibly reminded of the complexity of a language that we too often take for granted as a tool of communication. The recognition of this complexity may be reflected in a deeper understanding of the problems faced by students, and may result in a heightened degree of empathy. On this point Clifford Prator, in his article 'In Search of a Method', has stressed the equal importance of psychology, along with language knowledge, in teaching students a second language. He states that

> It is as important - perhaps more important - for us to understand the nature of our students as it is to understand the nature of language. We therefore have much to learn from psychology, the discipline which studies how language is acquired and the personal variables that may affect its acquisition. (1976, Prator, 7)

However, on a practical note, I believe that a course in linguistics can provide insights and raise issues that can have a direct bearing upon classroom methods of teaching. I propose to outline some of these aspects now.

An increased knowledge of the language being taught tends to make a teacher more critical of what goal he is attempting to achieve in any particular section of work. In the preparation of teaching aids, the teacher that has been introduced to linguistics will be more critical in evaluating aids as a means to his goal. He will also be constantly questioning his teaching techniques as to their overall effectiveness. He should also be more adaptable in his approach to teaching and, most importantly, more readily perceive the source of problems facing students.

In the correction or overlooking of errors, the teacher with some knowledge of linguistics will be aware of different types of errors and when and how to correct them. This is an area where a teacher with some knowledge of linguistic research will be advantaged. Wilkins has described the study of errors in language learning as being

> one of the few investigations into language structure that has improved pedagogy as its aim and is therefore truly a field of applied language research (1974, Wilkins, 224)

The teacher must be able to discriminate between 'slips' that we all make and which I believe should not be corrected, and prevailing errors which, if socially unacceptable, should be eradicated through later practice. Students will make errors as they test their hypotheses about the new language. If there are no errors, how can the teacher assess that effective learning has taken place? A knowledge of contrastive analysis can often, by prediction, allow teachers to avoid common sources of error. Research by J C Richards has indicated that words almost similar in meaning, such as 'very' and 'so', and 'for' and 'since', should not be taught at the same time. (1974, Richards, 13) Such knowledge can assist the teacher to avoid unnecessary sources of confusion and error.

The importance of rhythm and intonation is stressed in the study of linguistics, which puts the major emphasis upon the spoken rather than the written word. The student of linguistics will realise that stress plays a grammatical role. For example import is a noun, while import is a verb. The sentence 'John Maxwell is here' can convey two different meanings, by the placing of a terminal after 'John' or by omitting this terminal.

When smaller word groupings are considered, we can see readily how minor changes in intonation, probably more than any other factor, enables us to differentiate meanings of small word groups. When the expression 'round house' is spoken, one is able to distinguish between the railway 'round house' and the architectural innovation 'round house', simply by the variation in stress pattern. A combination of word stress and terminal placement can tell one whether the 'black bird trap' is a 'blackbird trap' or a 'black birdtrap'. Again, word stress allows one to differentiate in speech between 'White House' and 'white house', as well as between 'Long Island' and 'long island'. (1965, Gleason, 180, 185)

Roberts quotes many examples of shifts in the meaning of a sentence that parallel shifts in stress. One example is as follows:

He is my brother. (not the other fellow)
He is my brother. (Why do you deny it?)
He is my brother. (not Sam's brother) (1963, Roberts, 181)

Perhaps with today's longer hair styles, we could add a further meaning:

He is my brother. (not my sister)

Other examples of sentences that alter their meaning as primary stresses and terminals are moved through the sentences are:

Is Tom going to repair that car?

and, on a more lighthearted note,

What is this thing called love?

All ESL teachers should be aware of the significance of the rising and falling inflection in question phrases. Burgess has gone one step further and has claimed that there are two ways of saying the sentence 'I expect you'll want a wash'. If this statement is made with a falling pitch at the end, Burgess considers the statement to be inoffensive. However, if the expression is said with a rising pitch at the end, Burgess believes that there is a slight suggestion that "the person addressed is habitually dirty, not just travel-stained." (1975, Burgess, 65)

With linguistics' emphasis upon the spoken word, the teacher is made more aware of the importance of the teacher's role as a model for his students. Artificial 'schoolroom' registers will provide students with a false model. Natural speech and natural stress patterns are essential to the thoughtful teacher.

Perhaps the penultimate word could be given to Wilkins:

> It would be absurd to pretend that no one can be a good language teacher unless he has a knowledge of linguistics. It is possible that linguistics is not even one of the most important elements in the preparation of a language teacher. The value of linguistics is that by increasing his awareness of language, it makes him more competent and therefore a better language teacher. (1974, Wilkins, 229)

In conclusion, I consider that the study of linguistics does indeed have some value to ESL teaching. I believe that it can in fact create a more informed and sensitive language teacher, and that some of the findings from linguistic research can, in a practical sense, be of value to the practising ESL teacher.

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PREPARATION OF MULTI-PURPOSE MATERIALS

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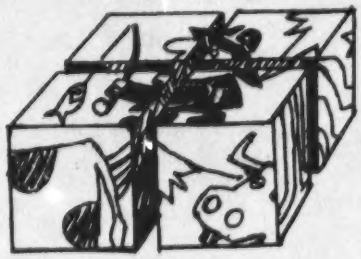
Continuing escalating costs and limited funding have made teachers even more aware of the need to buy multi-purpose materials. Teacher-prepared materials can be made to suit the interests and abilities of individual pupils or groups, but it is difficult to keep such materials from wearing out or to alter them for use by other second language learners. To cover everything with plastic is time-consuming and expensive, and to mount materials on heavy cardboard or plywood is also a lot of work. Some interesting commercially published materials have appeared recently in plastic cube form, but all are limited to the content printed on each cube. An initial cash outlay to buy some perspex photocubes will provide an attractive, durable means of presentation for a wide variety of manipulative materials and the added complexity of multiple choice offers much needed cognitive challenge.

Materials can be prepared for general activities or adapted for an individualised programme. Sets of pictures, shapes, numbers or words can be prepared on standard-sized cards which are easy to store. Under perspex, ordinary magazine pictures or hand-printed word cards appear to be professionally made. Six photocubes will hold thirty-six cards which may be for sentence-building, size-ordering, shape-matching or 3D jigsaw puzzles, depending on the age and language development stage of the pupil.



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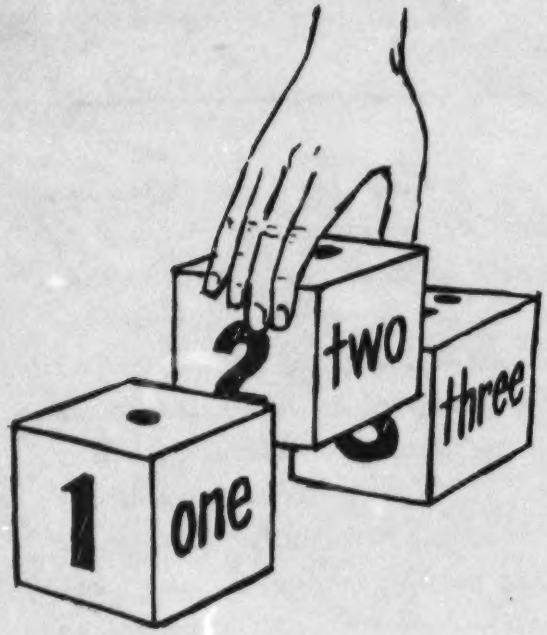
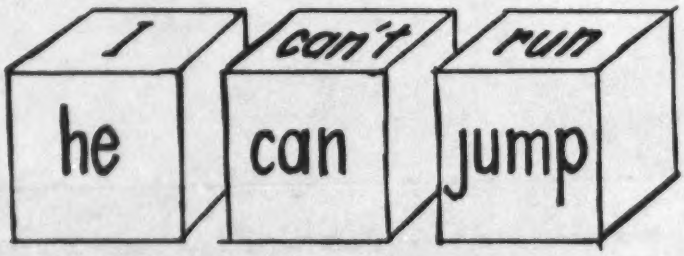


Attractive multiple jigsaws are easily made by cutting six magazine pintures into four squares, each the size of the photo cube, with one square from each picture being placed in each of the cubes. Children manipulate the blocks to make up the six different pictures, one at a time. It is also easy to make cards for linear matching of figures, dots, number pictures, number words, etc. Ordering and sequencing skills can be practised with the cubes which provide a range of six different activities.

The word cube or flashcard idea is often used in ESL programmes for introducing and practising negative and interrogative transformations. I have found that children enjoy handling the "blocks" and the teacher can control the degree of difficulty by making the possible substitutions foolproof or by including choice items in areas of grammar and vocabulary which are familiar to the student.

Known vocabulary and new words required by the children can be put into cubes for sentence manipulation and substitution, so children develop an informal understanding of word class relationships and sentence transformations and the importance of word order.

Any one substitution cube will contain words of the same type; i.e. only pronouns, nouns, verbs, adjectives etc., so that in a sentence like



the cubes could be kept in the same order but rotated to make similar sentences. e.g. They will swim.

The benefits of the limitations imposed by the number of cubes and the number of sides on each will be appreciated when it is desirable to control certain dimensions of language so that students can experiment with new concepts. e.g. Match shape, size, colour:

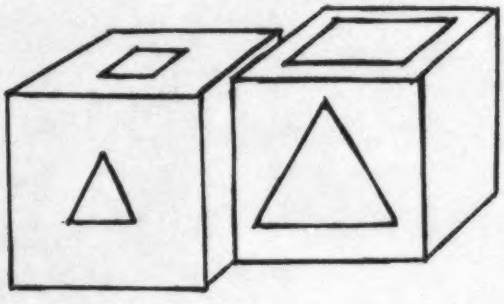


Photo cubes are available from gift shops, photographic supply shops and some chain stores. Depending on the brand, they cost between 1.00 and $2.50.